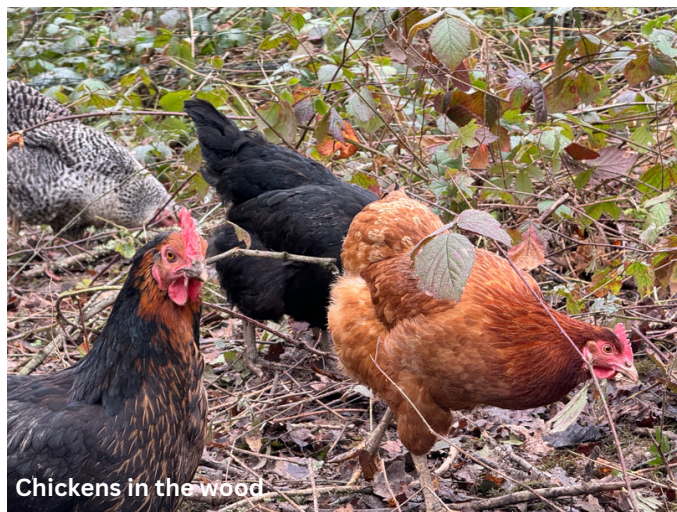




Joanna in front of her chicken house



Chickens in the wood



Green Oak Farm

# MEET THE HIGH WEALD FARMERS: DR JOANNA GORE

We recently meet up with first generation small holder Dr Joanna Gore at Green Oak Farm in Brightling, East Sussex to shoot a short film to help promote the **Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme**, which is delivered locally by the **High Weald National Landscape team**.

More than £1.3million has been awarded so far, and with funding still available for farmers and land managers in the High Weald, I was keen to learn more about how the grants have benefited Joanna's smallholding.

## Farm visit

Just next to the picturesque village of Brightling, sits Green Oak Farm, a certified Biodynamic and Organic small-scale farm, rich in variety, from livestock, to vegetable growing, to nature based healing. The drive down to the main set of buildings takes us past an orchard and a 3.5 acre block of woodland.

With varied backgrounds in fine art, education, conservation, woodwork and hospitality, Joanna and her partner Paul have ploughed their combined skills and passion into reviving the 10 acre smallholding, which was formerly a Plumpton College teaching site, before falling into dilapidation.

Today it is home to a flock of free-range organic chickens, a mixed flock of sheep and four pigs. Joanna says she plans to introduce a couple of cows soon and explains it is this variety of species which is key to the biodynamic system and healthy pasture.

## Applying for a Farming in Protected Landscapes grant

Shortly after moving to the smallholding, Joanna became aware of the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme, which funds projects that benefit climate, nature, people and place.



**High Weald**  
National  
Landscape

She approached the High Weald National Landscape team for support and spoke to a member of the Land Management team on the phone to talk through her ideas.

After the chat, Joanna successfully applied for a FiPL grant to help purchase a larger chicken coop, which is located in their 3.5 acre woodland.

“The chickens love being in the woods,” she said, explaining how she gives her chickens a large area to roam amongst the trees with lots of brambles and scrub to rummage around in. To help guard against predators Joanna uses a perimeter electric fence, moving it regularly to give them fresh habitat.

Eager to meet her hens, we follow her up a path, arriving at a smart wooden coop located in a protected glade.

She collects the eggs, which are a variety of colours and a key differentiator of the boxes she supplies her daughter to sell in her shop “The Peppered Pear Pantry” in Goldaming. Each box has a pretty light blue egg, laid by one of her Emerald hens.

Next, she throws out some grain to entice them into a new run. One by one they come through the little hatch and start pecking away at the brambles and scratching the ground.

With the chickens safely moved to their new run, we head back to the main farmyard and Joanna fills up a bucket of nuts for the her small flock of sheep. After feeding them, it’s time for a fresh paddock and they obediently follow her up the track to the top orchard. As soon as we arrive in the field, they get to work grazing the long grass.

## Improving an existing hedgerow by hedge laying

Joanna points out the smartly laid hedge that borders the road.



Joanna's small flock of sheep



Electric fenced area for chickens



"We also received FiPL funding to lay 200 metres of hedge and it's really helped improve the habitat," she said.

It's made the hedge a lot thicker and as a result she has noticed a lot more wildlife - including insects, nesting birds and small mammals.

As part of the FiPL process Joanna got three quotes and decided to go with a local contractor named David Dunk, who was very reasonably priced and did a fantastic job, she said.

## Workshop space and a community vegetable garden

Joanna showed us her workshop space, located in a converted farm buildings, where she runs nature based healing days, farm courses such as "Herbal health for Animals" and biodynamic inspired land ceremonies, as well offering the space as a venue to other likeminded organisations to host their own event. We also walked round her vegetable growing area, which she hopes will be the centre of a community gardening programme they plan to start this year, where people come together to grow and eat.

## Next steps

If you would like to do a project like this on your land, funding from the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme is still available - visit [highweald.org/fiopl](https://highweald.org/fiopl) to learn more and fill out a short online enquiry form. A member of the High Weald National Landscapes team will then get in touch to answer any questions and help you with an application.

## More information

Looking for more inspiration? Checkout some of the other farmers we visited in our Meet the High Weald Farmer series. All of them have benefited from the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.

